

“Hands-on”

SOCIAL STUDIES

for the Multigrade Classroom

By Elaine Plemons and Jeanette Stepanske

For the multigrade teacher time is of the essence. When a daily schedule includes a minimum of 16 classes, something is likely to get shortchanged. More often than not, it is social studies. Small schools usually have little if any

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budget for “extras” like social-studies resource materials.

Because many multigrade schools are so isolated, their teachers have trouble planning field trips to historical sites within an hour or two’s driving distance.

Student interest is a factor, too. Students commonly dislike the topics of history and geography, complaining that they are “just a lot of facts and dates.”

Can something be done to correct these problems? The authors believe that a few simple steps can

make social studies an interesting, learning-by-doing experience for students.

The teacher should start with a large calendar of the school year. Taking the social-studies topics from the year’s curriculum guide, he or she then determines how many weeks will be spent on each topic. This becomes the yearly plan.

Next the teacher outlines a more detailed unit plan for each topic. This can be done in four steps:

1. *Familiarity of Objectives.* The



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teacher quickly reviews the curriculum guide to identify the objectives and skills to be included in the unit.

2. *Gathering of Resources.* These include films, slide programs, maps, people, library books, learning games and activities, duplicating books, as well as textbooks and workbooks.

3. *Planning Teacher-Directed Class Periods.* The teacher begins to group the objectives and skills identified in Step 1 that can be comfortably and appropriately grouped together in a series of class periods. These classes become the core of the unit plan. Teacher-directed class periods are alternated with independent activity periods to allow the teacher to meet with other grades.

4. *Independent Activity Periods.* During these periods supplemental resources are assigned to reinforce the objectives and skills.

A variety of approaches should be utilized to vary both the teacher-directed and independent activity periods. The types of student activities described below can be used in either Step 3 or 4. These activities can facilitate decision-making, problem solving, and critical thinking. The activities require little teacher preparation or money. They include empty-chair drama, role-playing, simulation, and special group activities.

Because teachers may worry that

these techniques will create more problems in grading, the authors have included an activity for summarizing and categorizing the major topics for review and evaluation. The activity also suggests ways to include information from the inquiry activities on teacher-made tests.

Empty-Chair Drama

The empty-chair drama allows students to vicariously meet famous people and discuss historical events. To begin, the teacher selects a historical event or person, such as Benedict Arnold, and one

or more students to research the topic. At the close of the investigation the students compile a fact sheet about the topic.

When the group is ready to share the information with the class, the teacher places an empty chair in front of the classroom, explaining that the class will now become acquainted with a very famous person, Benedict Arnold. However, since Mr. Arnold is no longer living, an empty chair has been placed at the front of the room to represent him. The students are told to direct their questions to Mr. Arnold. Answers will be given by the researchers as though Benedict Arnold himself were speaking.

Role Playing

Role-playing provides students with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with a specific problem or social dilemma. Through this technique students learn to think through the consequences of an action and to improve their decision-making skills.

Once the problem has been introduced, the students act out various ways of solving it. Then they discuss the positive and negative consequences of each decision and action. The following problem could be used for a unit on the American Revolutionary War:

Introduction briefing question: Have you ever made an unpopular decision? How do people treat you when you make such a decision? What do you have to consider before making this kind of decision?

Read the following scenario that would have occurred during the Revolutionary War. What decisions will each character need to make? What will be the consequences of each decision?

Scenario: In 1763 Mr. Ethan Stanley was the only hat maker in Savannah, Georgia. One morning during breakfast he looked over the top of his newspaper at his wife, Dela, and said, "Dela, I've made a very important decision."

"What's that, dear?" mumbled Dela, biting into her English scone.

"I've decided that unlike many of our neighbors, we will remain true and loyal to England and King George III. I know, dear, that your family up in the East has joined the patriots' cause, and that your brothers even belong to the Sons of Liberty. I realize that your sympathies are with those rabble-rousers.

"However," Ethan added, seeing his wife's shocked expression, "let me remind you that wars are very bad for the hat-

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least two weeks, each student becomes personally involved in the convention. Emotions can run high with walkouts even taking place. Students learn that they can argue with one another and still be friends, even if this is sometimes difficult.

At the completion of the game, the class has written a constitution for the United States. The teacher then goes through the student constitution article by article, comparing it with the actual Constitution. I have been amazed to hear the students using the same arguments and methods to get their way as were used by the founders of America.

Civil War Simulation Game

At the academy level, I used a Civil War simulation game in which each student represents a state governor at an imaginary convention a few years before the war broke out. The convention deals with each of the major issues confronting the country and the steps leading up to the war. As each step is completed, the teacher lectures the students on what actually happened.⁶

Can we make American history come alive? The above suggestions can help make the subject a fascinating exploration of the story of our country and church, and offer dividends in critical thinking skills and research techniques. □

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Lynne Cheney, *American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1987).

² Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), pp. 17, 18.

³ The techniques were used in eighth-grade social studies at John Nevins Andrews School, and in American history at Takoma Academy.

⁴ Recommended books include Ron Graybill's *Mission to Black America*, Maria Anne Hirschmann's *I Changed Gods*, and Jan Doward's *The Seventh Escape*. A highly recommended journal, now in its 11th year of publication, *Adventist Heritage: A Journal of Adventist History*, is produced by the Department of Archives and Special Collections with the Department of History and the Division of Religion, Loma Linda University, Riverside, CA 92515-8427. Styled after *American Heritage*, this journal provides articles full of pictures and illustrations that can be helpful in the classroom.

⁵ Because of the danger of pointing to specific events as a fulfillment of prophecy, it is better to provide a general theological framework for interpreting recent happenings.

⁶ Teachers in other countries can adapt the above ideas to suit the historical and political events in their own lands.

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making business, and that I don't know any other trade. Without my shop we would not have food on the table or a roof over our heads. Furthermore, to demonstrate our loyalty I've invited two British soldiers to board in our home."

Dela, choosing her words carefully, said....

Debriefing questions: What options does Dela have, and what are the consequences of each? What could happen to Ethan's business when friends and acquaintances find out about his decision? What if he changes his mind and supports the patriots?

Simulation Games

Students can participate in a variety of experiences through simulation games. Such games provide numerous opportunities for decision-making, problem solving, and conflict resolution. The following game is an example:

Briefing questions: How do you feel when you are unable to express your ideas or opinions?

How do you think the colonists felt when they were unable to vote on laws that affected their lives?

Read the following scenario and decide which of the laws or acts passed by the English Parliament would negatively affect the greatest number of colonists.

Scenario: It is 1766. You and several colonists in Boston have decided to form a committee and travel to England. The purpose of the trip is to speak with King George III and members of the English Parliament about the increased tensions and even open hostility toward English rule in the colonies. Your committee has decided on a moderate approach when they meet with the king. Rather than protest all the laws imposed by England on the colonies, the committee will select and present a protest regarding only two laws that have the most negative effects on the largest number of colonists. Which two of the following will your committee select?

Write a list of reasons why each law needs to be repealed. Also include a list of reasons that the king might have for keeping the laws.

Laws and Acts:

1. *Proclamation of 1763* ordered American colonists to stay east of the Allegheny Mountains. Colonists could not go west to establish settlements. The law was intended to prevent further Indian raids against British forts.

2. *Navigation Acts* declared that trade with the colonists had to be carried out by ships

owned, built, and manned by Englishmen and certain products, called enumerated articles (sugar, tobacco, cotton, wool, indigo, rice, and others) could be sold only to England and not traded with any other country.

3. *Quartering Act of 1764* stated that the colonists must furnish food and living quarters for British troops stationed in the colonies.

4. *Stamp Act of 1765* stated that the colonists must pay a special tax on all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, and all other printed matter used in the colonies.

Group-Based Activities

The following two activities can be used with all students as introductory, diagnostic, or review activities.

Seek, Find, and Sign¹

Directions: SEEK people who can answer the following questions. When you FIND someone who knows the answer to a question, ask that person to SIGN his or her name on the line beside the question.

- ___ 1. Knows someone who buys merchandise from other countries.
- ... 2. Has a family member who has served in the United States Army, Navy, or Air Force.
- ___ 3. Knows where a famous tea party took place.
- ... 4. Knows what happened to Crispus Attucks.
- ___ 5. Can describe what Minutemen were.
- ___ 6. Knows someone who has protested against unfair treatment.
- ___ 7. Has a family member who lives west of the Allegheny Mountains.
- ___ 8. Can list three items that were taxed as a result of the Stamp Act.
- ___ 9. Can explain the Quartering Act of 1764.
-10. Can tell why British soldiers were called Lobster Backs.
- ___11. Can explain how Paul Revere became famous.
- ___12. Has traveled across a large body of water in a boat.
- ___13. Can describe the type of transportation that was affected by the Navigation Acts.
- ___14. Can define *continental*.

Colonial Mystery²

The purpose of this activity is to identify the mystery event including the date, the place, and the primary characters.

Directions: The teacher should make approximately 15 clue cards. Some of the cards should be irrelevant. (See samples below.) Randomly distribute cards to students, who take turns reading their cards

aloud. After all the clues are read, students try to name the mystery event, the date, place, and primary characters.

- Patriots under the leadership of Samuel Adams and John Hancock gathered weapons and ammunition and hid them.
 - Paul Revere and William Dawes were couriers for the Committee of Correspondence.
 - Harriet Tubman helped many slaves escape.
 - On April 18, 1775, two couriers were sent to warn the Minutemen, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock.
 - A courier in Charlestown watched for the signal of light from the Old North Church in Boston.
 - The carpetbaggers traveled South to help.
 - General Gage planned to send troops to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock.
 - The Sons of Liberty were a group of colonists who resented British rule.
 - Minutemen were farmers and townspeople who drilled regularly so they could be ready to fight in a minute.
 - The Committees of Correspondence were groups of colonists interested in carrying news from colony to colony.
 - Couriers were prepared to make fast rides from city to city any time of the day or night.
 - The Sons of Liberty wanted to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock that they were going to be arrested by General Gage and the British army.
 - General Gage and his British army wanted to arrest Adams and Hancock and destroy the hidden guns in Concord.
- Event:* Midnight ride of Paul Revere
Date: April 18, 1775
Place: Old North Church, Boston to Lexington, Massachusetts
Primary Characters: Paul Revere, William Dawes, Dr. Samuel Prescott

Evaluation and the Inquiry Process

A vital yet often frustrating aspect of inquiry activities is the final pulling together of the unit, including summarizing the information and preparing final tests.

In the following activity students determine what should be common knowledge for each grade level, then categorize and place important concepts and facts on a bulletin board or chart titled: "It's Common Knowledge." Teachers can then use this information on test questions. This activity may go on during the unit or at its conclusion.

The teacher assigns unit subtopics to groups of students who then determine what information is important. Group members write each concept or fact on a separate

strip of paper. Next, the students rearrange the strips from easy, or most common information, to difficult, or least common information. After determining the difficulty of each strip of information, the students indicate the grade level that should be responsible for knowing the information. Finally, the strips are arranged under the appropriate subtopics in order of difficulty.

These information strips, along with questions pertaining to the process of obtaining the information, provide the teacher with possible test questions.

The above suggestions can help multigrade teachers organize their time and make social studies exciting for elementary students. □

REFERENCES

- ¹ Thomas Turner, "People Scavenger Hunts: New Twist to an Old Game," *Learning*, 10:1 (September 1981).
- ² From "Mystery Event," a mimeographed activity by Thomas N. Turner, professor of education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION: A CRITICAL NEED

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quently in my adult life—I invariably start with the best geography I can find. This takes precedence over everything else, even history, for I need to ground myself in the fundamentals which have governed and in a sense limited human development. . . . If I were a young man with any talent for expressing myself, and if I wanted to make myself indispensable to my society, I would devote eight or ten years to the real mastery of one of the earth's major regions. I would learn languages, the religions, the customs, the value systems, the history, the nationalisms, and above all the geography, and when that was completed I would be in a position to write about that region, and I would be invaluable to my nation, for I would be the bridge of understanding of the alien culture. We have seen how crucial such bridges can be.²

Geography and the Church

Trained geographers can also play an important role in the work of the church. Michener's quotation offers an apt description of the skills we would like to see church workers develop. Insights gained from geography can help guide church work in cities, as they offer information about physical, eco-

Geography Quiz

Here is a little quiz to whet your students' interest in geography. Have them work individually or in small groups to find the answers. Suggest resources such as almanacs, *National Geographic*, and the *SDA Yearbook*.

1. You are on an itinerary for the church in Africa, just south of the equator. After a hot night, you waken to see, near the horizon, a mountain with snow on the summit. Which mountain is this and in what division of the world field are you visiting?

2. You have just received a letter from a cousin in Dacca who says that the leading industry of the country is survival; all else is luxury. What country is she writing from, and why would she make such a statement? What two rivers are at the same time a blessing and a curse to the country? Why?

3. You have answered a call to serve the church in Christchurch, New Zealand. What type of clothing would you need to take with you? In what kinds of occupations would you expect your neighbors to be engaged?

4. Tibet is often called the "Roof of the World." Why? What kind of Christian church work is carried on there? What are some of the problems missionaries would encounter in that country?

5. Identify the country you think has the most Seventh-day Adventists per thousand in the population. Why do you think this is so? Which country has the fewest per thousand? What factors might have kept the figure so low?

nomic, and ethnic factors that impinge on evangelism. Geographers are hired to coordinate marketing for many large international firms—why not for the church and its world-wide mission?

Curriculum Changes Needed

There is a pressing need for the church to develop a three-pronged